



**United States Department of State**

***Washington, D.C. 20520***

July 10, 2019

Case No. F-2018-06639  
Segments: PRM/EX-0001IC3

Katherine M. Anthony  
American Oversight  
1030 15<sup>th</sup> Street, NW Suite B255  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Anthony:

I am writing in response to your request dated August 30, 2018, under the Freedom of Information Act (the "FOIA"), 5 U.S.C. § 552.

The Department of State ("Department") cannot confirm or deny the existence of records responsive to certain parts of your FOIA request. Namely, the Department cannot confirm or deny the existence of "email communications sent or forwarded to, received from, copying, or blind copying [stephen.miller@who.eop.gov](mailto:stephen.miller@who.eop.gov) or [s.miller@who.eop.gov](mailto:s.miller@who.eop.gov)," nor can it confirm or deny the existence of records responsive to Parts 2 or 3 of your request. If records responsive to the aforementioned portions of your request existed, processing them in FOIA would tend to reveal information in which an individual maintains a significant privacy interest that outweighs the public interest in disclosure. The existence of such records is therefore protected by FOIA Exemption 6, 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(6).

The Department is able to process the remainder of your request and has thus far located five responsive documents. We have determined that one document may be released in full and four documents may be released in part. An enclosure explains the FOIA exemptions and other grounds for withholding material. Where we have made excisions, the applicable FOIA exemptions are marked on each document. All non-exempt material that is reasonably segregable from the exempt material has been released. All released material is enclosed.

Processing of your request is ongoing. We will keep you informed as your case progresses. If you have any questions, your attorney may contact Trial Attorney Josh Kolsky at (202) 305-7664.

or Joshua.Kolsky@usdoj.gov. Please refer to the case number, F-2018-06639, and the civil action number, 19-cv-00774, in all correspondence about this case.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Weetman", written in a cursive style.

Susan Weetman  
Chief, Programs and Policies Division  
Office of Information Programs and Services

Enclosures: As stated.

The Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552)

FOIA Exemptions

- (b)(1) Information specifically authorized by an executive order to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy. Executive Order 13526 includes the following classification categories:
- 1.4(a) Military plans, systems, or operations
  - 1.4(b) Foreign government information
  - 1.4(c) Intelligence activities, sources or methods, or cryptology
  - 1.4(d) Foreign relations or foreign activities of the US, including confidential sources
  - 1.4(e) Scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
  - 1.4(f) U.S. Government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities
  - 1.4(g) Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, infrastructures, projects, plans, or protection services relating to US national security, including defense against transnational terrorism
  - 1.4(h) Weapons of mass destruction
- (b)(2) Related solely to the internal personnel rules and practices of an agency
- (b)(3) Specifically exempted from disclosure by statute (other than 5 USC 552), for example:
- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| ARMSEXP        | Arms Export Control Act, 50a USC 2411(c)                    |
| CIA PERS/ORG   | Central Intelligence Agency Act of 1949, 50 USC 403(g)      |
| EXPORT CONTROL | Export Administration Act of 1979, 50 USC App. Sec. 2411(c) |
| FS ACT         | Foreign Service Act of 1980, 22 USC 4004                    |
| INA            | Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 USC 1202(f), Sec. 222(f) |
| IRAN           | Iran Claims Settlement Act, Public Law 99-99, Sec. 505      |
- (b)(4) Trade secrets and confidential commercial or financial information
- (b)(5) Interagency or intra-agency communications forming part of the deliberative process, attorney-client privilege, or attorney work product
- (b)(6) Personal privacy information
- (b)(7) Law enforcement information whose disclosure would:
- (A) interfere with enforcement proceedings
  - (B) deprive a person of a fair trial
  - (C) constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy
  - (D) disclose confidential sources
  - (E) disclose investigation techniques
  - (F) endanger life or physical safety of an individual
- (b)(8) Prepared by or for a government agency regulating or supervising financial institutions
- (b)(9) Geological and geophysical information and data, including maps, concerning wells

Other Grounds for Withholding

- NR Material not responsive to a FOIA request excised with the agreement of the requester

**From:** Sandoval, Stephanie K <SandovalSK@state.gov> **RELEASE IN FULL**  
**Sent:** Friday, July 13, 2018 4:05 PM  
**To:** PRM-DAS <PRM-DAS@state.gov>; PRM-Directors and Deputies <PRM-DirectorsandDeputies@state.gov>  
**Cc:** PRM-Press-DL <PRMpress@state.gov>  
**Subject:** Another top NSC official ousted under Bolton

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FYI, this story is about Jennifer Arangio.

Another top NSC official ousted under Bolton

<https://www.politico.com/story/2018/07/13/national-security-council-jennifer-arangio-ousted-719691>

Note this line: "The former White House official said Arangio's just-the-facts approach put her at odds with top Trump aide Stephen Miller, an immigration hardliner, and others involved with the Domestic Policy Council, especially on the issue of refugees."

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Stephanie Sandoval | Public Affairs Officer |  
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM/MCE)  
Tel: 202-453-9356 | Email: [Sandovalsk@state.gov](mailto:Sandovalsk@state.gov)

**Official**  
**UNCLASSIFIED**



**From:** Veprek, Andrew M </O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=907847A7AFB347458722F0EA9367AA2E-VEPREK, AND>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 31, 2019 6:17 PM  
**To:** Houlton, Tyler Q <HoultonTQ@state.gov>  
**Subject:** FW: Andrew Veprek fact-checking request

RELEASE IN PART  
B5, B6

Tyler,

Thanks for meeting with me today. [REDACTED]

B5

Thanks,  
Andrew

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**From:** Sandoval, Stephanie K <SandovalSK@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Friday, May 31, 2019 2:35 PM  
**To:** Veprek, Andrew M <VeprekAM@state.gov>  
**Cc:** PRM-Press-DL <PRMpress@state.gov>; PRM-Staff Assistant <PRM-StaffAssistant@state.gov>  
**Subject:** FW: Andrew Veprek fact-checking request

Andrew, See below points for your review. She has asked for our response by next week, June 7.

Best,  
Stephanie

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Stephanie Sandoval | Public Affairs Officer |  
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM/MCE)  
Tel: 202-453-9356 | Email: [Sandovalsk@state.gov](mailto:Sandovalsk@state.gov)

Stay Connected with PRM:



**From:** Davis, Julie [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, May 31, 2019 2:00 PM  
**To:** Sandoval, Stephanie K <SandovalSK@state.gov>  
**Cc:** PRM-Press-DL <PRMpress@state.gov>; PRM-Staff Assistant <PRM-StaffAssistant@state.gov>  
**Subject:** Re: Andrew Veprek fact-checking request

B6

Thanks Stephanie. Here are the points for his review. They are all related to Mr. Veprek's time serving at the DPC in the White House. We are submitting our manuscript early next week, so would need a response within a week from today (by June 7) in order to be able to make any necessary changes in line with our deadlines.

--Starting in 2017, Veprek is a regular attendee at Stephen Miller's Friday meetings on immigration policy

--Veprek is deeply involved in the discussion around lowering the refugee resettlement cap in 2017. When NSC officials try to insert favorable assertions about the program in discussion documents, like saying that it is a "humanitarian program" or that most of the resettled people are women and children, he objects and edits them out. In one meeting, Veprek says it's not appropriate to include that statistic because it is a "heartstrings fact"

meant to create a misimpression.

--Vepek tells White House officials they are not to refer to global cooperation or the benefits of migration because "Stephen won't accept that," and these are "red lines" that can no longer be crossed when drafting communiques or other joint statements at summits.

--Vepek becomes angry when he hears that a UN special rapporteur for human rights has asked for the administration's cooperation to produce a report on racism and xenophobia around the globe. He goes to NSC officials who deal with UN issues and says how dare they question us on this, and calls it a political hit job against Trump that is taking up the valuable time of senior administration lawyers. Vepek wants the White House to put out a public statement condemning the rapporteur. Vepek says the U.S. is an open book and the rapporteur can just read the Constitution and the 14th amendment to see that we've achieved racial equality. The American people voted for this president, Vepek adds, and they explicitly rejected this internationalist approach.

--Vepek is involved in the effort to pull the US out of the talks on the global compact on migration. He and Hamilton find an article on the blog of the Harvard Law Review that argues that such agreements can become soft law, and cite it to argue that joining the negotiations could put the US in an impossible position. Vepek also adds a copy of Trump's immigration principles to the discussion documents to show that the global compact on migration ran counter to the administration's policy.

All best,  
Julie

On Fri, May 31, 2019 at 11:25 AM Sandoval, Stephanie K <[SandovalSK@state.gov](mailto:SandovalSK@state.gov)> wrote:

Hi Julie, Thanks for reaching out. We're happy to help.

Could you send us your questions and the manuscript passages about Andrew Vepek so we can respond? Also, what is your preferred deadline?

Best regards,  
Stephanie

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Stephanie Sandoval | Public Affairs Officer |  
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM/MCE)  
Tel: 202-453-9356 | Email: [Sandovalsk@state.gov](mailto:Sandovalsk@state.gov)

Stay Connected with PRM:



**From:** Davis, Julie [redacted]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 29, 2019 3:17 PM  
**To:** PRM-Press-DL <[PRMpress@state.gov](mailto:PRMpress@state.gov)>; PRM-Staff Assistant <[PRM-StaffAssistant@state.gov](mailto:PRM-StaffAssistant@state.gov)>  
**Subject:** Andrew Vepek fact-checking request

B6

Greetings,

I am completing a book about President Trump and his immigration policies, and Andrew Vepek appears in a few sections and scenes that I would like to fact-check before finalizing the manuscript. These generally do not involve his time at PRM, but I thought this would be the best way to get in touch. Should I submit my questions through this office, or is there a better way for me to get them in front of Mr. Vepek?

Many thanks,  
Julie Davis

Julie Hirschfeld Davis  
Congressional Correspondent  
The New York Times

B6

B6



**From:** Veprek, Andrew M </o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=907847a7afb347458722f0ea9367aa2e-Veprek, And>  
**Sent:** Friday, August 31, 2018 12:42 PM  
**To:** Zadrozny, John A <ZadroznyJA@state.gov>  
**Subject:** FW: FOR URGENT AMV CLEARANCE: Reuters/Yeganeh Inquiry

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RELEASE IN PART  
B5, B6

FYI

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**From:** Veprek, Andrew M  
**Sent:** Friday, August 31, 2018 12:41 PM  
**To:** Sandoval, Stephanie K <SandovalSK@state.gov>  
**Cc:** PRM-Press-DL <PRMpress@state.gov>; Gauger, Kelly A <GaugerKA@state.gov>; Smith, Jennifer L <SmithJL1@state.gov>; PRM-Staff Assistant <PRM-StaffAssistant@state.gov>; PRM-Front Office <PRM-FrontOffice@state.gov>  
**Subject:** RE: FOR URGENT AMV CLEARANCE: Reuters/Yeganeh Inquiry

Stephanie,

My edits below in red. Thanks.

Andrew

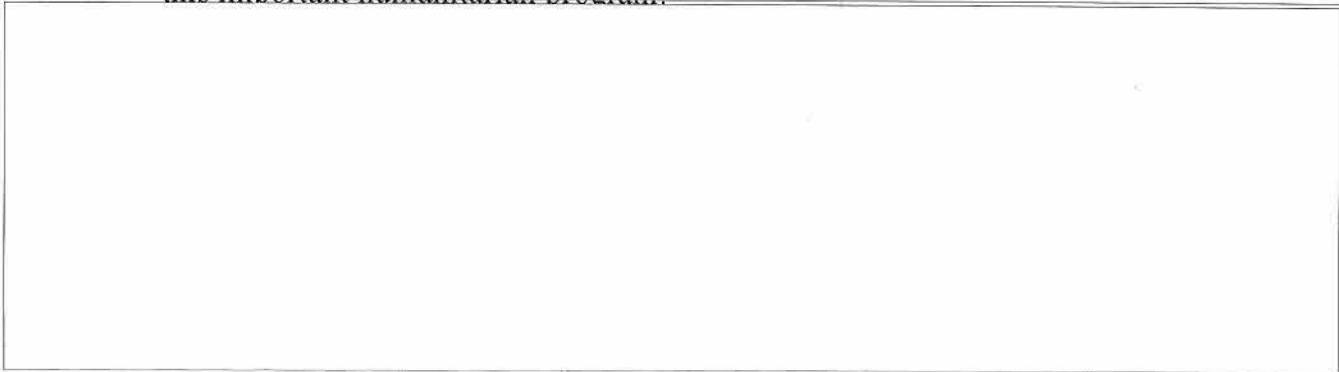
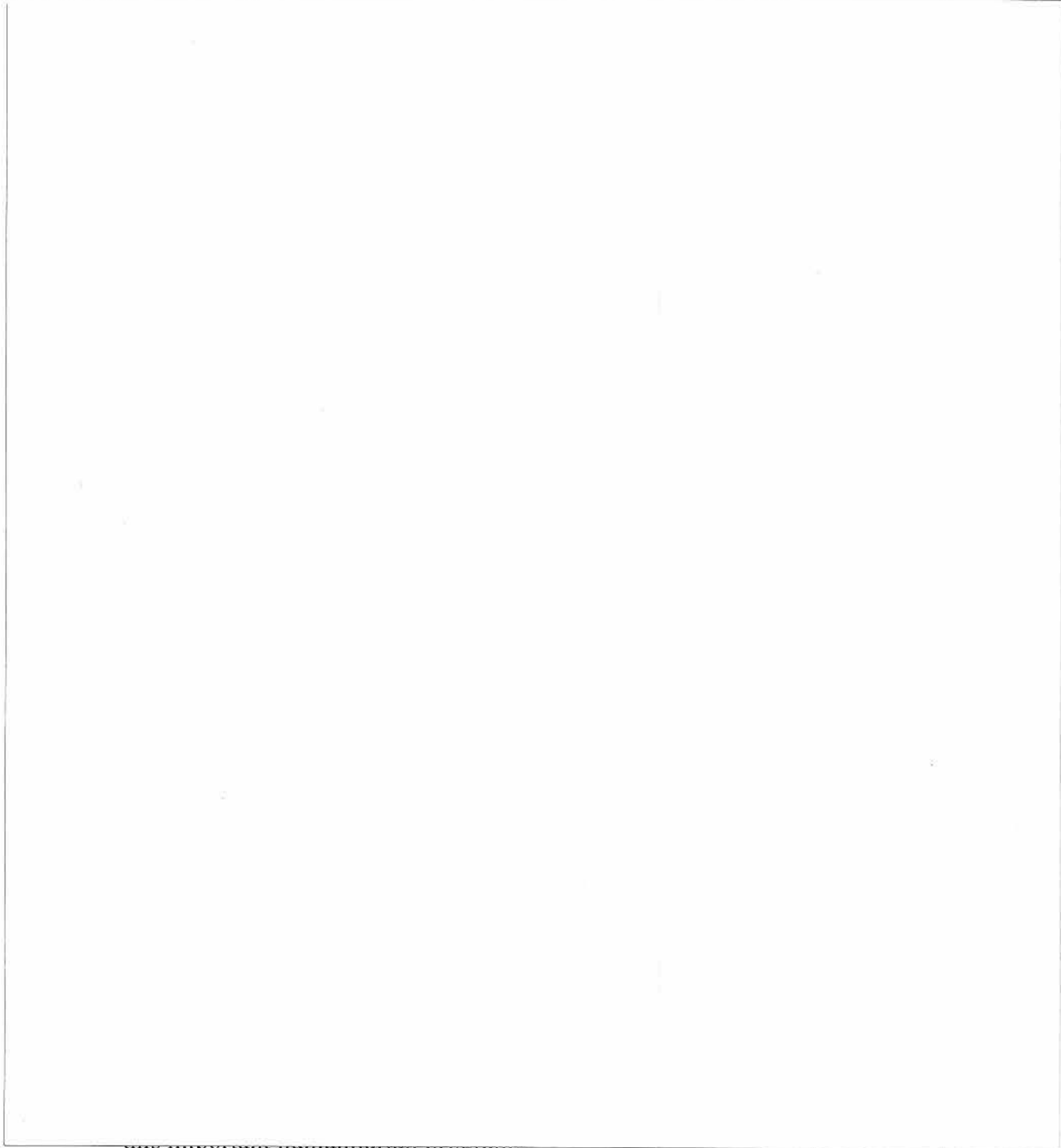
---

**From:** Sandoval, Stephanie K  
**Sent:** Friday, August 31, 2018 12:16 PM  
**To:** PRM-Front Office <PRM-FrontOffice@state.gov>  
**Cc:** PRM-Press-DL <PRMpress@state.gov>; Gauger, Kelly A <GaugerKA@state.gov>; Smith, Jennifer L <SmithJL1@state.gov>; PRM-Staff Assistant <PRM-StaffAssistant@state.gov>  
**Subject:** FOR URGENT AMV CLEARANCE: Reuters/Yeganeh Inquiry  
**Importance:** High

Andrew:

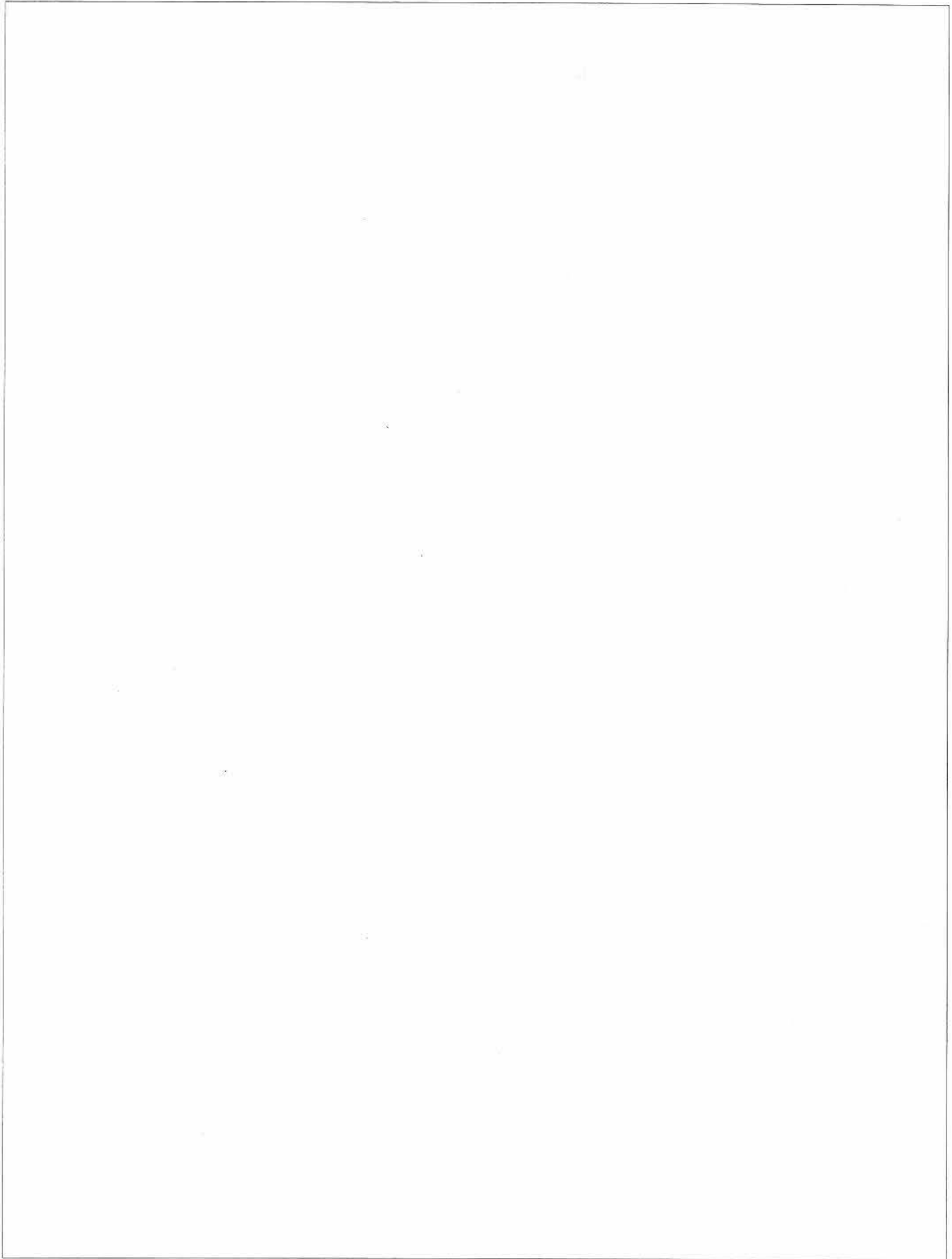
B5







B5



B5

Stephanie Sandoval | Public Affairs Officer |  
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM/MCE)  
Tel: 202-453-9356 | Email: [Sandovalsk@state.gov](mailto:Sandovalsk@state.gov)

**From:** Sandoval, Stephanie K

**Sent:** Friday, August 31, 2018 8:03 AM

**To:** PRM-Front Office <[PRM-FrontOffice@state.gov](mailto:PRM-FrontOffice@state.gov)>

**Cc:** PRM-Press-DL <[PRMpress@state.gov](mailto:PRMpress@state.gov)>; Gauger, Kelly A <[GaugerKA@state.gov](mailto:GaugerKA@state.gov)>; Smith, Jennifer L <[SmithJL1@state.gov](mailto:SmithJL1@state.gov)>; PRM-Staff Assistant <[PRM-StaffAssistant@state.gov](mailto:PRM-StaffAssistant@state.gov)>

**Subject:** Fwd: Recreate today , tomorrow

**Importance:** High

Carol, Andrew, see below note from Heather Nauert.

Stephanie Sandoval  
Press and Public Affairs Officer  
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration  
Tel: 202-453-9356  
Email: [Sandovalsk@state.gov](mailto:Sandovalsk@state.gov)

B5



Sent from my iPhone

**From:** Nauert, Heather N <[NauertHN@state.gov](mailto:NauertHN@state.gov)>

**Date:** August 30, 2018 at 10:10:57 PM EDT

**To:** Palladino, Robert J <[PalladinoRJ@state.gov](mailto:PalladinoRJ@state.gov)>, Ross, Adrienne <[RossA@state.gov](mailto:RossA@state.gov)>, Sandoval, Stephanie K <[SandovalSK@state.gov](mailto:SandovalSK@state.gov)>, Lloyd, Matthew <[LloydM@state.gov](mailto:LloydM@state.gov)>

**Subject:** Recreate today , tomorrow

B5

**From:** Sandoval, Stephanie K <[SandovalSK@state.gov](mailto:SandovalSK@state.gov)>

**Date:** August 30, 2018 at 10:04:36 PM EDT

**To:** Nauert, Heather N <[NauertHN@state.gov](mailto:NauertHN@state.gov)>

**Cc:** PA Press Duty <[PAPressDuty@state.gov](mailto:PAPressDuty@state.gov)>, PA Special Assistants <[PASpecialAssistants@state.gov](mailto:PASpecialAssistants@state.gov)>, PRM-Press-DL <[PRMpress@state.gov](mailto:PRMpress@state.gov)>

**Subject:** RE: Reuters Request for comment - refugees

Heather,

As promised, see below suggested points in response to Reuters' request for comment on changes to the refugee admissions program. These points are compiled from previously cleared press guidance. Appreciate your review and clearance. Her deadline is August 31.

Thanks,  
Stephanie

B5

B5

**Official**  
**UNCLASSIFIED**

**From:** Sandoval, Stephanie K  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 29, 2018 12:58 PM  
**To:** Nauert, Heather N <[NauertHN@state.gov](mailto:NauertHN@state.gov)>  
**Cc:** PA Press Duty <[PAPressDuty@state.gov](mailto:PAPressDuty@state.gov)>; PA Special Assistants <[PASpecialAssistants@state.gov](mailto:PASpecialAssistants@state.gov)>; PRM-Press-DL <[PRMpress@state.gov](mailto:PRMpress@state.gov)>  
**Subject:** FW: Reuters Request for comment - refugees

Heather, As promised, below is the request we received from Reuters/Yeganeh Torbati this morning.

This looks to be a comprehensive story on refugee admissions program changes over the last year. It re-visits the cost reports, the 120 day pause, SAO vetting, the refugee ceiling, PRM personnel changes, and more. A synopsis of the story and request for comment are below.

B5

B5

-Stephanie

Stephanie Sandoval | Public Affairs Officer |  
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM/MCE)  
Tel: 202-453-9356 | Email: [Sandovalsk@state.gov](mailto:Sandovalsk@state.gov)

**From:** Torbati, Yeganeh (Reuters) [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 29, 2018 9:04 AM  
**To:** PRM-Press-DL <[PRMpress@state.gov](mailto:PRMpress@state.gov)>  
**Subject:** Request for comment - refugees

B6

Hi PRM press team,

I'm writing a story examining the ways the Trump administration has transformed the refugee program, both openly and behind closed doors. My deadline to include your comment is close of business Friday, August 31.

People I have spoken to describe a program in turmoil, as the administration has slashed the number of refugees coming to the United States and effectively changed with nationalities are allowed in. They described a consistent pattern of hostility in the administration towards refugees, and said top officials have repeatedly ignored or rejected pro-resettlement findings from their own staffs and eliminated people who argued against deep cuts. I note that the U.S. is on track to admit fewer than 22,000 refugees, and that Muslims make up a far smaller portion of refugees coming to the U.S. than any time since at least 2002. I also note that the U.S. has virtually halted the admission of some of the world's most desperate people, including Syrians, Somalians, Iranians and Iraqis. I also state that while the administration stumbled in its early efforts to cut refugee admissions, such as the initial January 2017 ban, it has succeeded in using behind the scenes bureaucratic measures to reduce the refugee flow.

I report a number of incidents pertinent to the State Department, and I wanted to give you all a chance to comment on those.

- Last summer, as the 120-day refugee pause was in place, civil servants including State Department officials gathered to conduct a thorough security review of the refugee program (this is frequently called the 6a working group because of the section of the March 2017 EO which ordered it). I plan to report that their conclusions, which reached the White House in October 2017, were that with the recommended changes, refugee admissions could re-start for all countries. I also plan to report that Stephen Miller and John Kelly objected to those findings, and in particular had a problem with admitting Somali refugees. The 90-day security review of refugee admissions from 11 countries whose refugees require Security Advisory Opinions, I plan to report, was an attempt to fulfill the White House demands, rather than a policy based on the working group's conclusions. Does the State Department, which played a significant role in the review, have any comment on this?
- I also report that the administration eventually quashed a draft of an internal study that found that refugees brought in \$63 billion more in government revenues than they cost over a decade. What happened to that report? Will the government ever release its own assessment of refugee costs? Do you have any comment on the report generally?
- I also note the removal of Lawrence Bartlett from the refugee program at the State Department, and mention that he spoke up for the program, and that his removal was taken as a warning to other officials that they risk their jobs in speaking out. Does the State Department have any comment? Who ordered Bartlett's removal? Has the State Department ever found any wrongdoing that would justify his removal? What is the reason he was removed? Is there any inspector general or other type of investigation into Bartlett's removal?
- I also mention that Miller allies John Zadrozny and Andrew Veprek have joined the State Department,



where they are expected to try to cut admissions. Does the State Department have any comment on their appointments?

- I also report that in a meeting this spring with State Department officials and resettlement agencies, Veprek was introduced as the grandson of a refugee but then corrected his colleague and said he was the son of a refugee. I also note that in the meeting, Veprek emphasized that the 45,000 refugee cap is a ceiling and not a goal. Does he have any comment?
- I also plan to report again, as I did last week, that the State Department and Pentagon support maintaining the refugee ceiling at 45,000. Does PRM have any comment?
- I also discuss the SAO process, and note that the 11 SAO countries have seen a far steeper drop in refugee admissions than non-SAO countries. I also note that current and former officials attribute the issue to the way the FBI is conducting the checks. Does the State Department, which coordinates the SAOs, have any comment? Have you discussed this issue with outside stakeholders? What do you think is behind the delay/higher hit rate? Do you believe there is enough transparency in how these checks are conducted?
- I also report that new layers added onto the security vetting process have created additional hurdles for refugees and have blocked their entry, and effectively amount to the "extreme vetting" President Trump promised during the campaign. Does the State Department have any comment?
- I also report two PRM memos, one in February and one in May, to RSCs worldwide. The February one said that they could request a total of 2,010 SAO checks worldwide, and the May one slashed that number to 500. There previously was no limit on such requests. I plan to report that the quotas mean that effectively, a large portion of refugees from the 11 countries are not allowed to even begin the admissions process.

Best,  
Yeganeh

Yeganeh Torbati  
Reporter  
Thomson Reuters



B6



**From:** Veprek, Andrew M </o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=907847a7afb347458722f0ea9367aa2e-Veprek, And>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 7, 2018 12:16 PM  
**To:** Zadrozny, John A <ZadroznyJA@state.gov>  
**Subject:** FW: POLITICO reporter here...

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**From:** Harris, Cheryl  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 7, 2018 9:46 AM  
**To:** Veprek, Andrew M <VeprekAM@state.gov>  
**Cc:** PRM-Press-DL <PRMpress@state.gov>; OConnell, Carol <OConnellCT@state.gov>; Jackson, Nancy I <JacksonNI@state.gov>  
**Subject:** RE: POLITICO reporter here...

RELEASE IN PART  
B5, B6

Hi all,

FYSA – Heather Nauert also received similar questions from this journalist and responded on the record – Robert Greenan told me that she responded specifically on the question about S not getting accurate information and she replied something along the lines of it's ridiculous. I am trying to get a copy of her quote now.

Thanks,  
Cheryl

*Cheryl Harris  
Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Advisor  
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration  
U.S. Department of State  
Phone: 202-453-9370  
Email: [HarrisC@state.gov](mailto:HarrisC@state.gov)*

**Official  
UNCLASSIFIED**

**From:** Harris, Cheryl  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 07, 2018 8:37 AM  
**To:** Veprek, Andrew M <VeprekAM@state.gov>  
**Cc:** PRM-Press-DL <PRMpress@state.gov>; OConnell, Carol <OConnellCT@state.gov>; Jackson, Nancy I <JacksonNI@state.gov>  
**Subject:** RE: POLITICO reporter here...

Hi Andrew,

Thanks,  Adding Nancy here because the same journalist contacted PA yesterday regarding the memo to S about PRM.

B5

Thanks,  
Cheryl

*Cheryl Harris*

*Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Advisor  
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration  
U.S. Department of State  
Phone: 202-453-9370  
Email: [HarrisC@state.gov](mailto:HarrisC@state.gov)*

**Official**  
**UNCLASSIFIED**

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**From:** Veprek, Andrew M  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 07, 2018 8:28 AM  
**To:** Harris, Cheryl <[HarrisC@state.gov](mailto:HarrisC@state.gov)>  
**Cc:** PRM-Press-DL <[PRMpress@state.gov](mailto:PRMpress@state.gov)>; OConnell, Carol <[OConnellCT@state.gov](mailto:OConnellCT@state.gov)>  
**Subject:** FW: POLITICO reporter here...

Cheryl,

FYI – inquiry below from a reporter.

B5

Andrew

**From:** Nahal Toosi   
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 7, 2018 8:20 AM  
**To:** Veprek, Andrew M <[VeprekAM@state.gov](mailto:VeprekAM@state.gov)>  
**Subject:** POLITICO reporter here...

B6

Hi Andrew,

I hope you are well. I cover foreign policy for POLITICO, and I'm working on a story about the fate of the refugee resettlement program and the PRM bureau.

I'm mentioning in the story that there are concerns among activists that you and other people in the administration who are allies of Stephen Miller may not be allowing the Secretary of State to get accurate information about the refugee program.

I've asked the State Department press people for a few days now to talk to me about this broader story, but they've declined so far. And since I am likely to mention you specifically, I wanted to give you a chance to respond as well. My specific questions are: 1) Are you confident that you are sharing correct information about the refugee program to Secretary Pompeo? 2) What is your response to people who say you misrepresent data, conflate figures and do other things to present refugees as a potential threat? 3) What are you recommending that Secretary Pompeo do when it comes to retaining the PRM bureau and helping set the ceiling on refugee admissions?

Please let me know if you're willing to talk. Or feel free to just email your answers. My deadline is this afternoon.

Thanks,  
Halley

Nahal "Halley" Toosi  
Foreign Affairs Correspondent  
POLITICO

B6

[twitter.com/nahaltoosi](https://twitter.com/nahaltoosi)  
<https://www.facebook.com/nahaltoosijournalism/>

**From:** Veprek, Andrew M </o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=907847a7afb347458722f0ea9367aa2e-Veprek, And>  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 30, 2018 6:56 AM  
**To:** Zadrozny, John A <ZadroznyJA@state.gov>  
**Subject:** FW: Reuters Request for comment - refugees

RELEASE IN PART  
B5, B6

Here's the Reuters inquiry I mentioned yesterday. Sorry I didn't pass this on earlier.

Andrew

**From:** Sandoval, Stephanie K  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 29, 2018 9:58 AM  
**To:** PRM-Front Office <PRM-FrontOffice@state.gov>  
**Cc:** PRM-Press-DL <PRMpress@state.gov>; Gauger, Kelly A <GaugerKA@state.gov>; Ingraham, Hilary E <IngrahamHE@state.gov>; Smith, Jennifer L <SmithJL1@state.gov>; Pickering, Margaret S <PickeringMS@state.gov>  
**Subject:** Reuters Request for comment - refugees

Carol, Andrew,

FYI on an upcoming, comprehensive Reuters story on refugee admissions program changes. This re-visits the cost reports, the 120 day pause, SAO vetting, the ceiling, Larry, and more. A synopsis and request for comment is below.

appreciate your guidance on how we can respond.

B5

Here are my thoughts on a starting place—this is a compilation of cleared lines:

B5



B5

Stephanie Sandoval | Public Affairs Officer |  
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM/MCE)  
Tel: 202-453-9356 | Email: [Sandovalsk@state.gov](mailto:Sandovalsk@state.gov)

**From:** Torbati, Yeganeh (Reuters) [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 29, 2018 9:04 AM  
**To:** PRM-Press-DL <[PRMpress@state.gov](mailto:PRMpress@state.gov)>  
**Subject:** Request for comment - refugees

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Hi PRM press team,

I'm writing a story examining the ways the Trump administration has transformed the refugee program, both openly and behind closed doors. My deadline to include your comment is close of business Friday, August 31.

People I have spoken to describe a program in turmoil, as the administration has slashed the number of refugees coming to the United States and effectively changed with nationalities are allowed in. They described a consistent pattern of hostility in the administration towards refugees, and said top officials have repeatedly ignored or rejected pro-resettlement findings from their own staffs and eliminated people who argued against deep cuts. I note that the U.S. is on track to admit fewer than 22,000 refugees, and that Muslims make up a far smaller portion of refugees coming to the U.S. than any time since at least 2002. I also note that the U.S. has virtually halted the admission of some of the world's most desperate people, including Syrians, Somalians, Iranians and Iraqis. I also state that while the administration stumbled in its early efforts to cut refugee admissions, such as the initial January 2017 ban, it has succeeded in using behind the scenes bureaucratic measures to reduce the refugee flow.

I report a number of incidents pertinent to the State Department, and I wanted to give you all a chance to comment on those.

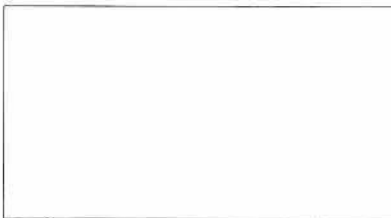
- Last summer, as the 120-day refugee pause was in place, civil servants including State Department officials gathered to conduct a thorough security review of the refugee program (this is frequently called the 6a working group because of the section of the March 2017 EO which ordered it). I plan to report that their conclusions, which reached the White House in October 2017, were that with the recommended changes, refugee admissions could re-start for all countries. I also plan to report that Stephen Miller and John Kelly objected to those findings, and in particular had a problem with admitting Somali refugees. The 90-day security review of refugee admissions from 11 countries whose refugees require Security Advisory Opinions, I plan to report, was an attempt to fulfill the White House demands, rather than a policy based on the working group's conclusions. Does the State Department, which played a significant role in the review, have any comment on this?
- I also report that the administration eventually quashed a draft of an internal study that found that refugees brought in \$63 billion more in government revenues than they cost over a decade. What happened to that report? Will the government ever release its own assessment of refugee costs? Do you have any comment on the report generally?



- I also note the removal of Lawrence Bartlett from the refugee program at the State Department, and mention that he spoke up for the program, and that his removal was taken as a warning to other officials that they risk their jobs in speaking out. Does the State Department have any comment? Who ordered Bartlett's removal? Has the State Department ever found any wrongdoing that would justify his removal? What is the reason he was removed? Is there any inspector general or other type of investigation into Bartlett's removal?
- I also mention that Miller allies John Zadrozny and Andrew Veprek have joined the State Department, where they are expected to try to cut admissions. Does the State Department have any comment on their appointments?
- I also report that in a meeting this spring with State Department officials and resettlement agencies, Veprek was introduced as the grandson of a refugee but then corrected his colleague and said he was the son of a refugee. I also note that in the meeting, Veprek emphasized that the 45,000 refugee cap is a ceiling and not a goal. Does he have any comment?
- I also plan to report again, as I did last week, that the State Department and Pentagon support maintaining the refugee ceiling at 45,000. Does PRM have any comment?
- I also discuss the SAO process, and note that the 11 SAO countries have seen a far steeper drop in refugee admissions than non-SAO countries. I also note that current and former officials attribute the issue to the way the FBI is conducting the checks. Does the State Department, which coordinates the SAOs, have any comment? Have you discussed this issue with outside stakeholders? What do you think is behind the delay/higher hit rate? Do you believe there is enough transparency in how these checks are conducted?
- I also report that new layers added onto the security vetting process have created additional hurdles for refugees and have blocked their entry, and effectively amount to the "extreme vetting" President Trump promised during the campaign. Does the State Department have any comment?
- I also report two PRM memos, one in February and one in May, to RSCs worldwide. The February one said that they could request a total of 2,010 SAO checks worldwide, and the May one slashed that number to 500. There previously was no limit on such requests. I plan to report that the quotas mean that effectively, a large portion of refugees from the 11 countries are not allowed to even begin the admissions process.

Best,  
Yeganeh

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